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Transition from Cohabitation to Marriage

The Role of Marital Attitudes in Seven Western and Eastern European Countries

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Abstract: Using longitudinal panel data from the Generations and Gender Surveys on 2,847 cohabiters from seven countries, we examine the role of marital attitudes in the transition from cohabitation to marriage and compare the strength of this association between Western and Eastern Europe. We expect a positive attitude towards marriage to increase the likelihood of cohabiters marrying. We also expect the association between personal attitudes and marriage formation to be weaker among cohabiters from Eastern Europe, due to stronger normative pressure to marry in contexts where cohabitation is less prevalent.

In both Eastern and Western European countries, we find a clear positive association between favourable views on marriage among cohabiters and their entry into marriage. Contrary to our expectations, we find evidence that this association is weaker in Western Europe. We discuss this finding in light of the greater postponement of marriage among Western European cohabiters, even among those with a positive attitude towards marriage, as well as the potentially greater significance of life course events and transitions that influence their decision to marry more strongly than is the case for their Eastern European counterparts.

This study extends the literature on the relationship trajectories of cohabiters by drawing attention to the normative context that may shape cohabiters' opportunities and constrain behavioural choice in the marriage formation process. Ultimately, it contributes to an understanding of the consequences of the societal diffusion of cohabitation in Europe.

Keywords: Marriage formation · Cohabitation · Cross-national comparison · Discrete time event history analysis · Generations and Gender Surveys

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1 Introduction

The need to better understand cohabiters' attitudes, beliefs and values towards marriage, and the association of these with the transition to marriage, has recently been emphasised within life course research (*Ortyl* 2013; *Perelli-Harris/Bernardi* 2015). The decision to marry may strongly depend on how much cohabiters personally value the institution of marriage, particularly in countries where virtually all unions start as unmarried cohabitation and cohabiters make similar relationship-specific investments to those of married couples. The strong association between positive attitudes towards marriage and marriage formation that has been found among Swedish cohabiters (*Duvander* 1999; *Moors/Bernhardt* 2009) may, however, not be as evident in contexts where cohabitation is less prevalent and accepted because, regardless of their personal feelings about marriage, cohabiters may not only be stigmatised for cohabiting in the first place but may also be confronted with social pressure to get married.

There is great variety in Europe regarding the prevalence and acceptance of unmarried cohabitation. In Western Europe cohabitation has virtually replaced direct marriage as the start of a union and has become the norm in the process of union formation (*Billari/Liefbroer* 2010). The group of cohabiters may not only be more diverse in their marital attitudes but also face less normative pressure to marry quickly. In Central and Eastern Europe by contrast, cohabitation is less prevalent and thus entered into by a more selective part of the population, is contested by normative beliefs about the institution of marriage, and is often associated with economic disadvantage (*Philipov/Dobritz* 2003). We formulated the following research question: Does the strength of the effect of personal attitudes towards the institution of marriage on cohabiters' transition to marriage differ in high and low diffusion contexts of cohabitation?

Our study contributes to the literature in three important ways. First, we extend a growing body of literature aimed at understanding the consequences of the societal diffusion of unmarried cohabitation by examining the marriage trajectories of cohabiters. This line of research has predominantly focused on cohabiters' life course stage (i.e. union duration, age, parental status) or economic opportunities (education, employment, race) and their association with marriage formation (*Duvander* 1999; *Kennedy/Bumpass* 2008; *Kuo/Raley* 2016; *Lichter et al.* 2006; *Manlove et al.* 2012; *Manning/Smock* 2002; *McClain* 2011; *Musick* 2007; *Oppenheimer* 2003; *Perelli-Harris et al.* 2012; *Smock et al.* 2005). We argue that by drawing attention to the role of attitudes in cohabiters' marital decisions, we complement the socio-demographic and economic explanations of behavioural choices.

Second, we add a cross-national perspective and compare this association in countries of low and high diffusion of unmarried cohabitation. We thus learn about how the context shapes the opportunities and constraints of behavioural choice in the process of union formation (*Liefbroer/Billari* 2010).

Third, we make use of prospective survey data on the partnership trajectories of cohabiters. This enables us to capture attitudes towards the institution of marriage prior to the demographic behavioural choice (marriage or continued cohabitation)

and thereby to disentangle the reciprocal association between selection and exposure effects; something that many prior studies could not effectively address due to the cross-sectional or retrospective nature of their data (*Surkyn/Lesthaeghe* 2004).

Our data stem from seven Western, Central and Eastern European countries that participated in two waves of the Generations and Gender Surveys (Austria, Bulgaria, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary and Russia). We studied 2,847 cohabiting men and women between 18 and 45 years of age. We assessed their attitude towards the institution of marriage in the first wave of data collection and obtained information on their relationship status roughly three years later, when some of them had married and others were still cohabiting or had dissolved their union.

2 Theoretical Background

Since the onset of the societal diffusion of unmarried cohabitation as early as in the 1970s in Scandinavia and as recently as the early 1990s in Central and Eastern Europe, living together without being married has become an increasingly common experience for European adults. The rising popularity of unmarried cohabitation accompanied the decline in marriage rates and the postponement of marriage to an older age. The increased prevalence of divorce has also been popularly framed within the narrative of the so-called Second Demographic Transition (SDT hereafter, *Lesthaeghe* 1995, 2010; *van de Kaa* 1987, 1993). Adherents of the SDT concept see ideational change as the driving force behind demographic shifts in partnerships and family life. At the onset of the diffusion of cohabitation, unfavourable attitudes towards the institution of marriage have been identified as strong predictors of people's choice to cohabit as an alternative to marriage (*Axinn/Thornton* 1992; *Clarkberg et al.* 1995; *Liefbroer* 1991; *Manting* 1996). At later stages of the SDT, cohabitation was increasingly also adopted by people who viewed this union type as a stepping-stone on the way to marriage and thus held more favourable attitudes towards the institution. As a result, relationship trajectories prior to marriage have become more heterogeneous and, in many European countries, most adults have cohabited prior to their first marriage (*Perelli-Harris/Lyons-Amos* 2015). Simultaneously, norms concerning cohabitation and marriage relaxed at the societal level, hence larger groups of society approved unmarried cohabitation (*Treas et al.* 2014). *Cherlin* (2004) coined the term "deinstitutionalisation" of marriage to describe these changing cultural perceptions about cohabitation and marriage and the increased complexity of union formation trajectories. Building on this thesis that marriage has become a choice rather than a necessity, and that cohabitation is becoming a nearly universal experience, a growing body of literature studying the marriage trajectories of established cohabiting unions emerged in an effort to understand the consequences of the changing composition of the cohabiting population in different normative contexts of partnership and family life.

2.1 Marital Attitudes and the Transition to Marriage

Symbolic interaction theory (*Blumer* 1969) would suggest that, through interaction with their social environment, people form a personal attitude towards the institution of marriage that influences their decision whether to marry or not. Attitudes here reflect a positive or negative disposition towards a given person, object or idea (*Ajzen* 1988). *Ajzen's* theory of planned behaviour (*Ajzen* 1991) suggests that marital attitudes have both a direct and an indirect effect on the transition (from cohabitation) to marriage. Direct, in that individuals tend to exhibit behaviour that is in line with the values they hold, and indirect in that the intention to marry that people form is based on their attitude towards marriage. Attitudes towards the institution of marriage have been widely used to explain the choice between cohabitation and marriage as a selection process at the moment of union formation (*Axinn/Thornton* 1992; *Bernhardt* 2004; *Bradatan/Kulcsar* 2008; *Clarkberg et al.* 1995; *Gerber/Berman* 2010; *Hoem et al.* 2009; *Liefbroer* 1991; *Puur et al.* 2012). This research demonstrated that individuals who hold disapproving attitudes towards the institution of marriage choose cohabitation, whereas individuals who consider marriage an important social institution would rather get married directly. With the unfolding diffusion of unmarried cohabitation, the selection into cohabitation based on marital attitudes has become weaker and premarital cohabitation may even become a normative step in the union formation process (*Billari/Liefbroer* 2010), hence also widely adopted by people with a positive attitude towards marriage. It has furthermore been shown that cohabitation is not necessarily a conscious decision but that people "slide" instead into co-residence with their partner (*Manning/Smock* 1995; *Stanley et al.* 2006). Apart from convenience as a reason to start living with a partner, qualitative work also identified housing needs or the benefits of shared finances as frequent reasons to start cohabiting (*Sassler* 2004). Particularly in cases where cohabiters already benefit from increased returns to scale, attitudes emerge as an explanation of why some cohabiters marry whereas others stay cohabiting or break up (*Moors/Bernhardt* 2009). There is however surprisingly little research on the influence of marital attitudes on cohabiters' transition to marriage that complements explanations of the transition from cohabitation to marriage based on economic and life stage determinants (for exceptions on the marriage formation of Swedish cohabiters, see *Duvander* 1999; *Moors/Bernhardt* 2009). In accordance with the SDT framework that explains individual behavioural choice between cohabitation and marriage at the moment of union formation as a selection process, we formulate a similar hypothesis on the transition from cohabitation to marriage: cohabiters who hold a positive attitude towards marriage are more likely to marry than their counterparts who hold a negative attitude (*Hypothesis 1*).

2.2 Contextual variation in the association between marital attitudes and marriage formation

Beyond cohabiters' personal attitudes about marriage, their marital decisions may also be influenced by what others consider to be appropriate behaviour. *Buchmann*

(1989) argued that such social norms shape demographic behaviour, particularly in less individualised societies. European countries differ in the degree of individualisation, hence the extent to which individuals experience increased freedom from normative constraints to conform to traditional demographic patterns enforced by their family of origin, the church and society at large (*Beck/Beck-Gernsheim* 2002). These constraints manifest themselves in the form of norms, more specifically social rules regarding the timing and sequencing of life events. These can be formal (i.e. laws that prohibit marriage below a certain age) or implicit (i.e. age norms for marriage). Acts which violate these norms, called deviance, result in sanctions (*Ajzen* 1991). There are two forms of sanctions, namely legal consequences and stigmatisation. In a context where cohabitation is not prevalent, married unions are often legally favoured over cohabitation, and cohabiters may also provoke derogatory remarks about not being married. It is argued that norms influence demographic outcomes through (anticipated) sanctions (*Neugarten et al.* 1965; *Settersten/Mayer* 1997). Concerning the transition from cohabitation to marriage, we argue that social norms go beyond regarding unmarried cohabitation instead of marriage as a deviation from expected behaviour; instead there is also social pressure to transform a cohabiting into a married union (*Ajzen* 1991). *Treas* and colleagues (2014) showed that although social norms concerning both premarital cohabitation and cohabitation as a permanent alternative relaxed between the mid-1990 and the early 2000s in all European regions, norms concerning cohabitation in the absence of marital intentions are more disapproving, and more so in Eastern than in Western Europe. Hence, in their decision of whether to marry or not, cohabiters also respond to social norms independently of their own attitudes by conforming to widely accepted behaviour in their social environment (*Liefbroer et al.* 1994). Countries with different levels of cohabitation prevalence may thus vary in the extent to which conformism is widespread. We would consequently expect that cohabiters in countries with low cohabitation prevalence are more likely to marry even if they have a negative attitude towards marriage. Contrary to this, and in line with the deinstitutionalisation of marriage thesis, the marriage norm may be less rigid in countries with a high prevalence of cohabitation, leaving the decision whether or not to marry largely up to the couple themselves. Consequently, the extent to which individuals value the institution of marriage may be a strong predictor of the decision to marry. In sum, we hypothesised that the strength of the association between marital attitudes and marriage formation is weaker in Central and Eastern European countries *(Hypothesis 2).*

2.3 The Context of Cohabitation in Western and Eastern European Countries Selected for this Study

Cohabitation has long historical antecedents in both Western and Eastern Europe (*Kok/Leinarte* 2015). The persistent differences in patterns and meanings of cohabitation in Eastern and Western Europe (*Bradatan* 2012) have been linked to historically distinct nuptiality patterns in these two regions since the middle ages (*Hajnal* 1965), as characterised by late and non-universal marriage west of an imaginary

line running from St. Petersburg to Trieste, and early and universal marriage east of that line.

For the purpose of this study, survey data from seven countries were selected from the Generations and Gender Survey Programme (refer to the data section for more information on available survey data and the sample selection): Austria, Germany (East and West) and France, geographically located in Western Europe (WE), and Bulgaria, Georgia, Hungary and Russia, geographically located in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). It is important to note that the selection of countries was not based on theoretical considerations, but on the objective of including all countries for which longitudinal information from two waves of data collection was available.

In Western European countries, represented in this study by Austria, Germany and France, unmarried cohabitation has become a common choice for starting a co-resident relationship, although childbearing within cohabitation is more prevalent in France compared to Austria and Germany (*Heuveline/Timberlake* 2004; *Hiekel et al.* 2014; *Sobotka/Toulemon* 2008). The majority of respondents (18-45 years) who were married in the year when the GGS data were collected had cohabited with their spouse before marriage (Austria: 77 percent, France: 81 percent, Germany: 69 percent), on average about 34 months in Austria and France and 22 months in Germany (own calculations based on GGS data).

Prior to the fall of the Iron Curtain, but dramatically accelerated by the turmoil of the transition from communism to democracy, unmarried cohabitation also spread across countries in Central and Eastern Europe but was of shorter duration and more rarely involved childbearing compared to Western European countries (*Philipov/Jasilioniene* 2008; *Puur et al.* 2012). The proportion of respondents aged 18 to 45 in the year of data collection who had cohabited with their spouse prior to marriage varied widely across the set of countries that here represent Central and Eastern Europe, but is lower compared to Western Europe: whereas in Hungary (25 percent) and Russia (38 percent) less than half of all married respondents had cohabited prior to marriage, this proportion was larger in Georgia (53 percent) and Bulgaria (64 percent) (own calculations based on GGS data). The majority of them married within one year of starting to cohabit. Hence, the mean duration (in months) of premarital cohabitation was significantly shorter compared to Western Europe (Bulgaria: 6.9, Georgia: 8.7, Hungary: 7.7, Russia: 6.8, own calculations based on GGS data).

The East-West differences in the demographic patterns related to cohabitation suggest a different normative context in both regions. Among a national representative sample of the entire population in the countries representing Western Europe in this study, the majority agrees (strongly) that it would be "alright for two people to live together without getting married" (Austria: 81 percent, France: 92 percent, Germany: 80 percent, own calculations based on data from the 2008 European Value Study).

Although norms concerning marriage and cohabitation have also relaxed in CEE countries (*Treas et al.* 2014), *Stankuniene* and *Maslauskaite* (2008) reported widespread resistance towards family change. The majority of the population support traditional patterns of family formation, although there is substantial variation

across countries. The acceptance of unmarried cohabitation within a national representative sample of the whole population also varies across CEE countries and is lower compared to WE countries. In Hungary 70 percent of the population agrees that cohabitation is acceptable, in Russia and Bulgaria it is about 61 percent, and only 32 percent of Georgians approve of cohabitation (own calculations, 2008 EVS data).

There is an ongoing scholarly debate surrounding the question of whether the spread of cohabitation in Eastern Europe has more to do with the economic crisis and social anomy than with value change (*Aassve et al.* 2006; *Coleman* 2004; *Kalmijn* 2007). Cohabitation as a sign of economic disadvantage may have emerged as a result of people coping with increased economic uncertainty during the shift from communism to democracy by replacing hard-to-reverse life events (i.e. marriage) with reversible ones (i.e. cohabitation) (*Kohler et al.* 2006). Hence, starting to live together without being married may imply a deviation from the behavioural norm to a lesser extent than it did in the past. However, given the short time horizon between forming a cohabiting union and institutionalising it through marriage, the true deviant behaviour may be violating norms by postponing (or foregoing) marriage. Using the same data as in the present study, *Hiekel et al.* (2014) showed that more cohabiters in these countries who considered the institution of marriage as outdated reported plans to marry than their Western European counterparts. This suggests that cohabiters may conform more readily to predominant and traditional family (marriage) formation patterns in these countries.

There are also major differences within Europe in the way in which unmarried cohabitation is treated in the legislation of individual countries. It goes beyond our knowledge and the scope of the paper to provide an exhaustive overview of the legal approaches to cohabitation in the different contexts. Broadly speaking, no country gives completely equal status to marriage and cohabitation in all policy dimensions, but also no country privileges marriage vis-à-vis cohabitation in all respects (*Perelli-Harris/Sánchez Gassen* 2012; *Sanchéz Gassen/Perelli-Harris* 2015). Since 1999, cohabiters in France have been able to register their union to ensure similar rights vis-à-vis their partner compared to married couples. This is not possible in Austria or Germany (unless for same-sex couples). All three countries (together with all Western European countries) have abolished laws that discriminated against children born outside of wedlock and grant equal rights to children from cohabiting parents (*Perelli-Harris/Sánchez Gassen* 2012). After the break-up of the Soviet system, the previously unified legal jurisdiction fragmented. In none of the former Soviet countries included in our sample is cohabitation considered a conjugal union under law (Lithuania and Ukraine are exceptions in the area) and most of the few efforts to achieve legal harmonisation between cohabitation and marriage relate to couples with dependent children (*Isupova/Perelli-Harris* 2012).

3 Data and Sample

Our sample was drawn from two waves of the Generations and Gender Surveys (GGS). The GGS is a set of comparative surveys of a nationally representative sample of the 18-79-year-old resident population in each of the 19 participating countries (*Vikat et al.* 2007). In the first wave, the overall size of the samples differed in each country but in most cases was about 10,000 respondents. The response rate varied and ranged from 35 percent in Lithuania to 84 percent in Romania (*Fokkema et al.* 2016). At the time this study was conducted, data from a second wave collected three years after the first wave were available for ten countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Russia. Three countries were excluded from the sample – the Netherlands because the data did not contain a measurement for marital attitudes in Wave 1, Lithuania and the Czech Republic because the marginal prevalence of cohabitation and a panel attrition rate of 80 (70) percent made meaningful statistical analyses impossible. This left us with a selection of seven countries located in Western, Central and Eastern Europe.

We selected individuals who were cohabiting with a partner of the opposite sex in Wave 1, were between 18 and 45 years of age in Wave 1[1] and were observed roughly three years later in Wave 2 of the panel. Our sample thus did not include same-sex couples. We had to exclude n=28 respondents for whom consistency checks based on sex and birth year reported in both waves raised serious doubts as to whether the same respondent had been re-interviewed. Moreover, n=492 respondents were excluded because they did not report their partnership and marital status consistently across the waves. It is conceivable that they misremembered when they started living with their partner, got married or whether they had been interviewed before or after these events occurred. This makes it particularly unfortunate that, in Wave 2, respondents' retrospective information on their partnership situation in Wave 1 had been used during data collection as filters for questions on subsequent marriage or separation. We could not therefore derive any reliable information on what had happened to these relationships, and dropped them from the analytical sample. The total number of our analytical sample was n=2,847 cohabiters from seven European countries.

The sample selection process faced two potential biases. First, sample attrition can bias the results if it is non-random but related to characteristics of the respondents. Second, cohabiters who marry quickly are less likely to be selected in our sample. In the following sections we elaborate on these potential sources of bias and describe how we dealt with them in the analyses.

The panel attrition rate between waves was 32 percent overall; lowest in Georgia and Hungary (less than 20 percent), higher in Austria (26 percent), France and

[1] The Hungarian sample comprised only individuals aged 21 years and older. The proportion of cohabiters under 21 was, however, very low in all other countries (1 percent of the total sample), meaning that there was no serious underestimation of cohabitation in the Hungarian sample.

Bulgaria (32 percent) as well as Russia (37 percent), and highest in Germany (72 percent).[2] Panel attrition may seriously bias our results, particularly if cohabiters with positive (negative) attitudes towards the institution of marriage are more likely to leave the panel during the observation period and therefore be excluded from our analytical sample. We therefore compared respondents who were cohabiting in Wave 1 and participated in both waves of data collection – hence our analytical sample – with their counterparts who dropped out of the panel between the waves regarding their attitude towards the institution of marriage. The t-test of the distributions of the marital attitude measure (not shown) revealed that respondents who dropped out did not differ from respondents who participated in both waves. Our analytical sample is thus not selective in terms of our variable of interest. We also examined potential bias due to panel attrition with regard to our control variables. These analyses showed that higher (compared to lower) educated as well as employed (compared to unemployed) respondents were more likely to participate in both waves. Compared to their childless counterparts, cohabiting parents were also more likely to participate in both waves. Western Europeans were more likely to drop out of the panel (caused above all by the high panel attrition in the German survey). Besides our substantial interest in controlling for potentially spurious effects between these characteristics and the timing of marriage, we also decided to include these variables in the multivariate analyses for the purpose of controlling for panel attrition selectivity.

In line with the survey design, we selected those who were not married from all respondents in a co-residential relationship in Wave 1. Hence, the sample selection took place at an arbitrary moment in respondents' relationship trajectory. The vast majority of respondents between the ages of 18 and 45, however, were married at Wave 1 and their proportion was higher in Eastern European countries (66.5 percent) compared to Western European countries (33.5 percent). 39 percent (Western Europe) and 58 percent (Eastern Europe) of the married respondents had cohabited previously with their spouse. This suggests that cohabiters in our sample might exhibit certain characteristics that made them choose to cohabit instead of marrying directly on the one hand, and to postpone marriage for longer on the other. We thus used a Heckman selection model that is described in further detail in the discussion of our analytical approach.

4 Measurements

Given our event-history analytical framework (elaborated below), the dependent variable was the hazard rate of transition from cohabitation to marriage between

[2] Since the panel attrition rate was extraordinarily high in the German panel data we repeated these analyses excluding these data. We drew identical conclusions from the model on the reduced sample and therefore decided to include the German sample despite its high attrition rate.

Wave 1 and Wave 2. The question from which we derived the information on marriage formation was posed at Wave 2 and was as follows: "Did you marry your partner after the last interview?" to which respondents answered either "yes" or "no", providing the date (month and year) of marriage if applicable.

Marital attitudes were measured at Wave 1 by the following question: "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Marriage is an outdated institution."? The level of agreement was measured using a five-point Likert scale. Respondents who answered 1=*strongly disagree* or 2=*disagree* were classified as holding a positive attitude towards marriage and considered it a relevant social institution in modern times. By contrast, respondents who answered 3=*neither agree nor disagree*, 4= *agree* or 5=*strongly agree* were classified as holding an indifferent or negative attitude towards marriage.[3]

With one exception, the control variables were measured in Wave 1 and were treated as time-constant (see Table A1 in Appendix). These included *plans to get married (*1=yes), as they were found to be positively correlated with transition to marriage (*Manning/Smock* 2002); *age at start of the union*, which reflects the norm related to family transitions; *union duration and its squared term*; *gender* (1 = female); *level of educational attainment* (1= lower secondary or lower, 2 = upper secondary and post-secondary, 3 = tertiary) which was found to be positively associated with cohabiters' transition to marriage in the process of family formation (*Perelli-Harris et al.* 2010); *employment status* (1 = employed, 2 = not employed, including unemployed, enrolled in education) and *ability to make ends meet* (scale ranging from 1 = *with great difficulty* to 6= *very easily*), which are proxies for economic deprivation often linked to the postponement of marriage (*Clarkberg et al.* 1995; *Duvander* 1999; *Gibson-Davis* 2009); and *previous partnership* (1=no previous partnership, 2=previous cohabitation, 3=previous marriage)[4] which is associated with lower odds of marriage (*Lichter/Qian* 2008; *Steele et al.* 2005). Additionally, in Wave 2, respondents reported whether they had had a(nother) child since Wave 1 and if so, provided the date of birth (month and year). The birth of a child can be a reason for a cohabiting couple to marry (*Perelli-Harris et al.* 2012; *Perelli-Harris et al*. 2010). We treated this event as a time-varying covariate. The corresponding dummy variable was given the value 1 nine months prior to the birth to capture the conception, and retained that value until the event or censoring.

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3 We also experimented with the categorical operationalisation of the variable that further distinguished between the two negative and the indifferent attitude towards marriage. Results indicated that cohabiters with an indifferent attitude towards marriage had very similar transition rates to marriage as cohabiters who (strongly) agreed that marriage was an outdated institution (results available upon request).

4 All respondents who were married to at least one of their prior partners were considered as previously married even though they might have cohabited with the partner they married or with a different partner.

5 Analytical Strategy

Two waves of the GGS allowed us to study the association between marital attitudes and marriage formation among cohabiters from a longitudinal perspective. Our statistical modelling strategy was based on event-history-analysis because it allowed us to study the association between a set of independent variables and the subsequent timing of marriage formation. Specifically, a Cox regression model (*Cox* 1972) was used to exploit the information of marriage formation, detailed to the month. Cox regression is an appropriate tool for modelling the discrete-time data with time-dependent covariates; it allows the inclusion of a correction term for selection bias; and it can be extended to the data with non-proportional hazard (*Allison* 1995). Respondents left the risk set at different time points. Respondents who married between waves left the risk set in the month of marriage. Respondents who dissolved their union between waves left the risk set in the month of separation and respondents who were still cohabiting at the end of the observation period were right-censored at Wave 2.[5]

As discussed in the data section, marriage-prone respondents may be underrepresented in our analytical sample. Consequently we had to take potential sample selection into account. Mirroring studies with similar selectivity challenges (e.g. *Billari/Liefbroer* 2007) and in line with *Heckman* (1976), we employed a two-stage modelling strategy.

The first stage of the analysis assessed potential factors for sample selectivity, such as already being married in Wave 1. This probit model was applied to all respondents (n=20,365), excluding those who dropped from the panel between waves. The predictors in this model were attitudes towards marriage, age, gender, education, employment, difficulty making ends meet, and prior co-residential relationship. In order to avoid collinearity of the correction term and predictors in the second step of our analyses, we included two additional variables in the selection model. The first variable indicates the diffusion of cohabitation in the given society (measured by the standardised proportion of all individuals 18-45 who have ever cohabited) and thus addresses potential selection into cohabitation versus direct marriage at the moment of union formation. The second variable, having a joint

[5] A potential concern is that specifying a Cox-proportional hazard regression of our event of interest may lead to an upward bias in the estimator of the event of interest (i.e. exiting cohabitation via marriage), if the presence of a competing risk (i.e. exiting cohabitation via union dissolution) is not accounted for. From a theoretical perspective, we argue that predicting union dissolution goes beyond the focal interest of our study that aims to explain individual and contextual differences in cohabiters' marital attitudes and entry into marriage. Theoretical arguments predicting marriage cannot be applied to union dissolution in a straightforward manner. From a methodological perspective, we argue that the availability of information on the timing of union dissolution, detailed to the month, implies that cohabiters who split up no longer contributed to the risk set which reduces the risk of biased estimates. However, union dissolution is relatively prevalent, particularly in our Eastern European sample. As a robustness analysis, we tested our hypotheses on the transition to marriage, specifying union dissolution as a competing exit route from initial cohabitation (results available upon request). From these findings we drew identical conclusions regarding our hypotheses.

biological child with the current partner, was chosen because of the strong empirical association between marriage and family formation (*Musick* 2007) and thus addresses potential selection regarding the timing of marriage. Both measures were significantly associated with the probability of being selected in our analytical sample but not with the transition from cohabitation to marriage between the waves.

The second stage of the analysis comprised two Cox regression models which tested our hypotheses, and both included covariate accounting for the selection bias, namely the inverse Mill's ratio derived from the selection model. Tests of multicollinearity showed that there was no risk of obtaining incorrect estimates. We used 200 bootstrap replications for each model to account for additional uncertainty stemming from the potential measurement error of the inverse Mill's ratio. The first model assessed the independent statistical association between our key explanatory variables (marital attitude and region) and the cohabiters' transition to marriage. The second model included an interaction term between marital attitude and region in order to test the hypothesis regarding East-West differences in the effect of marital attitude on marriage transition. We pooled data from the seven countries. Preliminary country-specific Cox regressions (not shown) revealed similar results in all countries but only had low statistical power due to the small sample sizes and number of events of interest. The preliminary analyses nevertheless confirmed our confidence in the fact that pooling the data and contrasting two broader regions would not mask important country-specific mechanisms. However, as the descriptive analysis shows, the greater heterogeneity in our sample of cohabiters from Central and Eastern Europe is mainly driven by Georgia being an outlier on most indicators. Georgian demographers have suggested that contemporary young Georgians increasingly tend to postpone or forego legal marriage after a religious wedding and are thus not covered by marriage statistics based on the Civil Registration Agency (*Badurashvili et al.* 2008). Also, marriage status in the harmonised GGS data refers to legal marriage. Using the pre-harmonised data from Georgia, we could identify 30 percent of Georgian respondents in the 18-45 age group who were not legally married to their current partner in Wave 1 but who married that partner in a religious wedding ceremony. Virtually none of them made the transition to legal marriage between the waves. Given the ambiguity surrounding marital behaviour in Georgia, we tested the robustness of our hypotheses-testing models by additionally specifying the same models but omitting the data from Georgia.

6 Results

Table 1 shows transitions from cohabitation to marriage between Wave 1 and Wave 2. In all, we observed 481 marriages, hence 17 percent of all cohabiters married during the observation period. One in seven (WE) and one in eight (CEE) respondents were still cohabiting at the end of the observation period. 298 cohabiters ended their relationship between both waves (285 separations, 13 partners died) and were considered censored in the month of union dissolution. Most marriages occurred among Austrian cohabiters, of whom one in four married (26,5 percent). The few-

Tab. 1: Cohabiters' relationship transitions during observation period

	Wave 1	Wave 2					
	Cohabiting	Married		Still cohabiting		Dissolved union	
	n	n	%	n	%	n	%
High-cohabitation countries (Western Europe)							
Austria	604	160	26.5	383	63.4	61	10.1
France	611	101	16.5	465	76.1	45	7.4
Germany	128	33	25.8	81	63.3	14	10.9
Low-cohabitation countries (Central and Eastern Europe)							
Bulgaria	323	24	7.4	280	86.7	19	5.9
Georgia	368	21	5.7	339	92.1	8	2.2
Hungary	475	84	17.7	296	62.3	95	20
Russia	338	58	17.2	224	66.3	56	16.6
Western Europe	1,343	294	21.9	929	69.2	120	8.9
Eastern Europe	1,504	187	12.4	1,139	75.7	178	11.8
Total	2,847	481	16.9	2,068	72.6	298	10.5

Source: Generations and Gender Surveys (GGS 2002-2009). Waves 1 and 2, authors' calculations

est marriages occurred among Georgian (5,7 percent) and Bulgarian cohabiters (7,4 percent). We thus observed a higher share of marriages among cohabiters in Western Europe than in Central and Eastern Europe. Given the higher prevalence and acceptance of cohabitation in Western Europe, these results may appear counterintuitive. However, as the selectivity analysis shows, these findings are explained by CEE cohabiters marrying faster, which decreases their probability of being part of our analytical sample.

In the following, we present separate descriptive results for each of the countries in order to gain further insight into the composition of our analytical sample. The top of Table 2 shows the distribution of our main independent variable, i.e. whether marriage is considered an outdated institution, as measured in the first interview. In Austria, France and Germany, around half of all cohabiters disagreed (strongly) with that statement. In CEE countries, we observed large differences: merely 21 percent of Bulgarian cohabiters held a positive attitude towards marriage, whereas 83 percent of cohabiters in Georgia did so. In Hungary, this proportion was 36 percent, and 50 percent in Russia.

At least half of all cohabiters planned to marry in the near future, and their proportion was larger in CEE compared to WE. The overall median duration of cohabitating relationships at the time of the first interview was 56 months. It was longest in Georgia (79 months) and Bulgaria (62 months) and shortest in Hungary (39 months). Our sample included more women than men in all countries except Georgia. Most respondents had had a secondary or post-secondary education (58 percent), followed by respondents with tertiary education (26 percent) or lower than secondary

Tab. 2: Descriptive results of independent variables

	AUS	FRA	GER	BUL	GEO	HUN	RUS	WE	CEE	Total
Marriage is an outdated institution (marital attitude)										
Agree (strongly)/neither agree, nor disagree	57.8	48.1	44.5	79.3	16.9	63.6	50.0	52.1	52.5	52.3
Disagree (strongly)	42.2	51.9	55.5	20.7	83.2	36.4	50.0	47.9	47.5	47.7
Intention to marry within three years										
Yes	50.0	40.3	40.6	45.2	84.8	64.4	52.7	44.7	62.6	54.2
No	50.0	59.7	59.4	54.8	15.2	35.6	47.3	55.3	37.4	45.8
Median relationship duration in months	57.0	58.0	43.0	62.0	79.0	39.0	46.0	56.0	56.0	56.0
Male	39.6	39.4	40.6	45.5	52.2	43.2	40.5	39.6	45.3	42.6
Female	60.4	60.6	59.4	54.5	47.8	56.8	59.5	60.4	54.7	57.4
Level of education attainment (ISCED)										
Lower secondary or below	7.0	14.1	13.3	48.6	7.6	15.4	11.8	10.8	19.8	15.6
Secondary, post-secondary	71.7	48.6	53.9	40.9	62.8	63.4	57.4	59.5	57.1	58.2
Tertiary	21.4	37.3	32.8	10.5	29.6	21.3	30.8	29.7	23.1	26.2
Employment										
Employed	94.9	88.4	80.5	55.1	53.5	90.5	81.4	90.5	71.8	80.7
Not employed	5.1	11.6	19.5	44.9	46.5	9.5	18.6	9.5	28.2	19.4
Mean difficulty in making ends meet[1]	4.4	3.3	3.7	1.8	2.4	3.3	2.4	3.8	2.5	3.2
Conception of child between the waves	30.3	26.7	21.1	24.5	26.1	28.0	12.7	27.8	23.3	25.4
Prior unions										
No prior union	64.4	70.7	60.9	76.5	94.8	70.5	49.4	66.9	73.0	70.1
Prior cohabitation	27.0	20.8	21.9	6.5	1.9	10.7	9.5	23.7	7.4	15.1
Prior marriage	8.6	8.5	17.2	17.0	3.3	18.7	41.1	9.4	19.6	14.8
Total n	604	611	128	323	368	475	338	1343	1504	2847

AUS=Austria; FRA=France; GER=Germany; BUL=Bulgaria; GEO=Georgia; HUN=Hungary; RUS=Russia; WE=Western Europe, CEE=Central and Eastern Europe; [1] measured on scale 1 (with great difficulty) to 6 (very easily)

Source: Generations and Gender Surveys, Waves 1 and 2, authors' calculations

education (16 percent). More cohabiters in WE countries had higher-level education compared to cohabiters in CEE countries; this difference was most pronounced in Bulgaria where, together with Georgia, the largest proportion of non-employed cohabiters could be found. Similarly, on average, CEE cohabiters found it more difficult to make ends meet in comparison to WE cohabiters. About a quarter of the cohabiters conceived a child between Wave 1 and Wave 2, with a slightly higher proportion of cohabiters doing so in WE countries (28 percent) than in CEE countries (23 percent). About a quarter of cohabiters had previously lived together with a partner or a spouse. The proportion of previously cohabiting respondents was higher in WE countries, whereas the proportion of previously married respondents was higher in CEE countries, however we again observed great differences among CEE countries. In sum, the descriptive analyses confirmed the well-documented heterogeneity of cohabiters across societies. Also consistent with previous studies was the fact that cohabiters in the selected Western European countries were somewhat more homogeneous compared to cohabiters in selected Eastern European countries, with Georgia being an outlier in many of the selected indicators.

Table 3 presents results from a probit model that assessed the selectivity of our analytical sample. Cohabiters in our sample clearly differ from those who were already married in Wave 1. Respondents who held a positive attitude towards the institution of marriage were more likely to be married in Wave 1 and thus less likely to be included in our analytical sample. Please note that the attitude towards marriage of these respondents was assessed after they had married. Given the reciprocal association between attitudes and behaviour, we could not deduct exposure effects from the selection and thus have potentially overestimated the difference in cohabiters' and spouses' marital attitudes. Eastern European respondents were more likely to be married in Wave 1 and thus not part of our analytical sample, reflecting the lower prevalence of cohabitation in these countries but also the fact that cohabiters may be quicker to transform their union into marriage. Parents, older and less well educated individuals are more likely already to be married at first interview. Although we have not observed selection in the sample based on employment status, individuals with difficulty in making ends meet are more likely to cohabit than be married in Wave 1. Respondents who had been cohabiting or married prior to the current relationship are also more likely to be selected, as well as those with shorter union durations. However, as the positive effect of the squared term of union duration indicates, the probability of selecting individuals increases at a given (longer) union duration.

Table 4 shows the results of the second stage of the statistical modelling, namely Cox regression models, with the timing of marriage as the dependent variable. In all models, the Inverse Mills Ratio controlling for sample selection bias is statistically significant. In a first step, we tested the association between an attitude towards marriage and the transition to marriage. A model containing only marital attitude (results not shown) revealed that cohabiters who expressed a positive attitude towards marriage had 3.1 higher odds of marrying than cohabiters who were indifferent or negative about the institution of marriage. Model 1 (Table 4) shows the results of a model that included other predictor variables. The positive association

Tab. 3: Estimates (odds ratio) for a probit model predicting sample selection (cohabiting instead of married in Wave 1) (N=20,365)

	Odds ratio
Positive about marriage (Ref=neutral/negative)	0.48***
Proportion of 18-45 year old population that ever cohabited (standardised)	1.19***
Age	0.99*
Female (Ref=male)	0.98
Education (Ref=lower secondary or below)	
secondary, post-secondary	0.90**
tertiary	0.80***
Not employed (Ref=employed)	1.04
Biological child with current partner (Ref=no)	0.53***
Difficulty in making ends meet[1]	0.95***
Prior co-resident union (Ref=no)	1.47***
Union duration	0.91***
Union duration (squared)	1.00*
Constant	3.07***

***p<.001 **p<.01 *p<.05 +p<0.1

[1] measured on scale 1 (with great difficulty) to 6 (very easily)

Source: Generations and Gender Surveys, Waves 1 and 2, authors' calculations

between a positive marital attitude and the timing of marriage remained statistically significant (OR=2.27). Cohabiters who were positive about marriage in Wave 1 were more than twice as likely to be married in Wave 2. This estimate is robust when controlling for sample selection and other factors associated with the timing of marriage. This finding thus supports Hypothesis 1. Western European cohabiters had a slightly higher likelihood of entering into marriage than cohabiters from CEE countries, but this effect was only marginally statistically significant.

We briefly discuss the effects of other predictor variables on the timing of marriage formation. Plans to get married accounted for a substantial decrease in the effect of marital attitude on marriage formation. This is because respondents who were positive about marriage were also more likely to have plans to get married. Interestingly, marital attitudes were not strongly correlated with marital intention and instead had their own separate effect. Other factors were also associated with marriage formation. Individuals with secondary and post-secondary education, or tertiary education had higher odds of entering marriage than cohabiters with lower than secondary education but did not differ significantly from each other. Cohabiters who were employed had higher odds of entering marriage compared to their non-employed counterparts, and similarly, the more easily a respondent was able to make ends meet, the more likely (s)he was to make the transition to marriage. Prior cohabitation decreased the odds of transition to marriage; union duration and its squared term did not influence the transition to marriage significantly. Lastly, con-

Tab. 4: Results (odds ratios) from Cox regression models predicting entry into marriage between Wave 1 and Wave 2, with controls for sample selection and with bootstrap parameter estimates

	Full sample		Sample excluding Georgia	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Positive about marriage	2.27***	2.61***	2.10***	2.72***
Living in Western Europe (Ref= Eastern E.)	1.27+	1.44*	1.11	1.40*
*Interaction positive attitude*West*		0.81		0.67*
Intention to marry (Ref=no)	3.10***	3.12***	3.19***	3.23***
Union duration	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Union duration (squared)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Age at the union formation	0.97*	0.97*	0.98*	0.98*
Female (Ref=male)	1.13	1.14	1.08	1.09
Education (Ref=lower secondary or below)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
secondary, post-secondary	1.86**	1.83**	2.01***	1.97**
tertiary	2.43***	2.41***	2.65***	2.62***
Not employed (Ref=employed)	0.58**	0.58***	0.64*	0.64*
Difficulty in making ends meet[1]	1.09*	1.09*	1.07+	1.07+
Conception of child between the waves (Ref=no)	1.66***	1.66***	1.68***	1.68***
Prior unions (Ref=no prior union)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
previously cohabiting	0.72*	0.72*	0.76+	0.75+
previously married	1.02	1.02	0.99	0.98
Inverse Mills' Ratio	0.40***	0.39***	0.63*	0.61*
n	2,847		2,479	

***p<.001 **p<.01 *p<.05 +p<0.1

[1] measured on scale 1 (with great difficulty) to 6 (very easily)

Source: Generations and Gender Surveys, Waves 1 and 2, authors' calculations

ceiving a child between waves had a significant effect on the transition to marriage, confirming the expected link between timing of childbearing and marriage.

Model 2 (Table 4) includes an interaction term between marital attitude and region in order to test Hypothesis 2 on expected country differences in the association between the marital attitude and marriage formation. With this interaction term included, the effect of a positive attitude towards marriage increasing the risk of marriage by 2.61 applies to Eastern European cohabiters who were thus more than twice as likely to marry compared to their counterparts who held an indifferent or negative attitude towards marriage. The effect of the interaction term indicates that this positive association between marital attitude and transition to marriage was reduced by 0.81 in Western European countries. This effect is, however, not statistically significant. The effect of region indicates that the odds of marriage for Western European cohabiters increased on average by 1.44, which is not explained by differences in their average marital attitude. This effect may reflect the stronger recuperation of postponed marriages among Western European cohabiters that we discussed in the selectivity analysis.

Given the particularities in the composition of the Georgian population of cohabiters we estimated the same two models omitting the data from Georgia (Table 4, Model 3 and Model 4). These analyses lead to almost identical results in Model 3 (i.e., the equivalent to Model 1), thus providing support for Hypothesis 1. Differing from the findings in the full sample, Model 4 (i.e., the equivalent to Model 2) reveals that the negative interaction between marital attitude and region regarding entry into marriage is statistically significant at the 0.05 level in the analysis omitting Georgia. This finding suggests that the link between a positive attitude towards marriage and marriage formation is weaker in Western Europe compared to Eastern Europe. Hence, neither the finding from the full model nor the model omitting Georgia support Hypothesis 2 in which we formulated the expectation that the attitude-behaviour link would be weaker in Eastern Europe because of the stronger societal norms regarding getting married that push cohabiters into marriage beyond their own attitudes towards the institution.

We reject Hypothesis 2 based on the direction of the effect; this points actually to a weaker association between marital attitudes and transition to marriage among Western European cohabiters. Based on these analyses we draw two conclusions. First, positive attitudes towards the institution of marriage were associated with higher odds of entering marriage. Second, although with great caution because the finding is not robust when Georgia is included in the Eastern European sample of cohabiters, the strength of the association between marital attitude and entry into marriage is weaker in Western European countries characterised by high diffusion of cohabitation and less normative pressure to transform cohabitation into a married union.

7 Conclusion and Discussion

This study began by arguing that a comparative perspective on the marriage trajectories of established cohabiting relationships deserves greater academic interest. We argued that the merit of theoretical considerations derived from the SDT framework lies in the attention that is drawn to attitudinal change and its intertwining with social norms in explaining changes and variation in demographic behaviour related to union formation. We reviewed country-specific literature which showed that cohabitation in some countries had already become the predominant way of starting a co-resident relationship, whereas in other countries, onset of the diffusion of cohabitation had been more recent. Related to the stage of diffusion of cohabitation are predominant social norms about the importance of getting married. The SDT framework suggests cross-national differences in the proportion of cohabiters holding (dis)approving attitudes about the institution of marriage as well as variation in the strength of social norms about marriage. We derived two hypotheses from these theoretical considerations. We expected first, that marital attitudes are associated with cohabiters' transition to marriage (H1), and second, that the strength of this association is weaker in Central and Eastern European countries with a low prevalence of cohabitation compared to Western European countries with a high prevalence (H2). Using panel data from two waves of the Generations and Gender Surveys, we compared two European regions comprised of pooled data from seven European countries and examined cohabiters' risk of marriage as a function of the extent to which they consider marriage an outdated institution, along with other socio-demographic and economic predictors associated with marriage formation.

Our first key finding was that, in line with studies that have investigated the selection of individuals into either cohabitation or marriage as the start of their union, cohabiters with a favourable attitude towards marriage were more likely to marry than cohabiters with a negative attitude. Though the present study only used one indicator, it was, in our view, a particularly interesting attitudinal measure for our research purpose. A cohabiter's (dis)agreement with a statement such as "Marriage is an outdated institution" indicates cohabiters' motives for living in a non-marital union and (future) relationship expectations but also reflects societal norms about marriage.

Our second key finding was that we identified country differences in the proportion of cohabiters who agreed with the statement that marriage is an outdated social institution. Agreement with that statement was generally higher among cohabiters in three of the four Central and Eastern European countries compared to cohabiters in the three Western European countries we examined. In line with the SDT framework, this suggests that in countries where cohabitation is less prevalent and the cohabiting population is more selective, cohabiters predominantly hold negative attitudes towards marriage, as such attitudes may have selected them into cohabitation in the first place. However, the underrepresentation of Central and Eastern European cohabiters in our analytical sample due to their transition to marriage prior to the first interview (Table 3) also suggests that many cohabiters in CEE countries have internalised widely shared ideas about the superiority of

marriage over cohabitation (*Mureşan* 2008; *Sobotka* 2008). Although more people are increasingly opting for cohabitation, cohabitation is largely viewed as inferior to marriage, and childbearing remains closely linked to the transition to marriage, particularly for individuals with greater socio-economic resources (*Haragus* 2015). Moreover, we also found larger cross-country diversity in Central and Eastern Europe compared to Western Europe in the level of (dis)agreement with the statement that marriage is outdated. This greater country variation within Central and Eastern Europe is usually explained by different challenges in the transition from state socialism to democracy and a market economy. Bulgaria and Romania experienced a more profound economic collapse and particularly slow recuperation with great social inequalities (*Haragus* 2015; *Thornton/Philipov* 2009). This suggests that entry into cohabitation in these countries is associated with economic constraints and particularly long-term cohabitating unions may be understood as a "poor man's marriage" for those who cannot afford to marry (*Oppenheimer* 1988, 2003).

Our third and main finding was that the multivariate analyses did not reveal the context dependencies of the association between marital attitudes and marriage formation that we expected to find. The interaction effect provided no evidence that association between marital attitudes and transition to marriage is weaker in Central and Eastern Europe where cohabitation is less prevalent and less accepted because of cohabiters' exposure to strong social pressure to get married, irrespective of their personal attitudes towards the institution of marriage. On the contrary, the direction of the interaction effect suggests that the association between marital attitudes and marriage formation is actually weaker in Western Europe where cohabitation is more common. This effect does, however, reach statistical significance in a model that omitted the Georgian sample. As readers will recall, the Georgian data exhibited a large number of particularities in the composition of the cohabiting population and the transition rate to legal marriage compared to other (Eastern) European countries in our sample. As noted earlier, research from Georgia suggested a stronger reluctance among young Georgians to register a church wedding with the legal authorities (*Badurashvili et al*. 2008). The fact that the country comparative GGS surveys consider legal marriage (and not religious marriages) means that they may not fully reflect actual marital behaviour and the meaning of marriage in the Georgian sample.

We can envisage three reasonable explanations for the weaker association between marital attitudes and transition to marriage among cohabiters in Western compared to Eastern Europe and invite future research to address them. First, this result might indicate that Western European cohabiters – even those with positive attitudes towards marriage – can postpone marrying without being stigmatised. Second, the virtual absence of strong social pressure to transform a cohabiting into a marital union could increase the importance of "pragmatic" reasons to marry, such as tax benefits or the purchase of residential property given that in many Western European countries, cohabiters and spouses are treated similarly in terms of taxation, property and inheritance rights (*Perelli-Harris/Sánchez Gassen* 2012). Finally, in such contexts, the relationship history itself may be more predictive of the entry to marriage than people's general attitudes towards the institution of marriage. For

instance, the conception of a child was more strongly associated with entry into marriage among Western European cohabiters compared to their Eastern European counterparts (results not shown). Ideally, measures which reveal how important respondents view such "pragmatic" reasons or life events for their decision to marry would allow explicit testing of such mechanisms. Unfortunately, these measures have not been included in the GGS and we are not aware of any longitudinal, country comparative survey which collects both attitudinal measures and demographic outcomes that includes such measures.

Of course, there are certain limitations to this study. Only a minority of our cohabiting sample entered into marriage during the observation period of roughly three years. Keeping the overrepresentation of long-term cohabiting unions in our analytical sample in mind, this indicates the increasing longevity of cohabiting unions, predominantly driven by a postponement of marriage to later in life. It is not caused by the cohabiters not being observed for long enough. The median duration of the relationship was five years at the first interview and we recorded transitions to marriage during the following three years. We identified stark differences in cohabiters' timing of marriage formation that are explained by differences in their approval of the institution of marriage. We feel that this finding underlines the importance of taking marital attitudes into account in order to reflect heterogeneity in cohabiters' marital trajectories.

We are aware that pooling data from countries in two broad European regions masks the diversity of cohabitation patterns within both regions that have been emphasised in the literature (*Sobotka* 2003; *Sobotka/Toulemon* 2008) and have been confirmed in our descriptive analyses. However, small sample sizes in some of the countries in this study prevented us from conducting statistically meaningful analyses for separate countries, and the number of countries did not permit the application of a multilevel analytical framework either. Future analyses should include more European countries to see whether the diversity within Eastern Europe observed in the current study was predominantly due to the limited and non-random selection of countries for which we had suitable data available. A multilevel analytical framework would also allow testing of the influence of country-level indicators in the normative and economic sphere (e.g. unemployment, housing market characteristics, legal arrangements) that reveal such contextual effects and formally test whether they explain country differences in the marriage transition among cohabiters. Moreover, a study on regional differences within countries could reveal differences beyond national borders.

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Appendix

Tab. A1: Descriptive statistics for variables used in the analyses

	Cases Not Selected Married in Wave 1 (n=17,518)			Cases Selected Cohabiting in Wave 1 (n=2,847)		
	Percentage	Mean	(SD)	Percentage	Mean	(SD)
Marital attitudes						
Neutral/negative	23.4			52.3		
Positive	76.6			47.7		
Geographical location						
Living in Eastern Europe	66.2			52.8		
Living in Western Europe	33.9			47.2		
Intention to marry						
yes	n.a.			54.2		
no	n.a.			45.8		
Union duration in months at Wave 1		157.0	(79.8)		73.0	(60.5)
Age		36.1	(6.1)		31.7	(6.5)
Male	38.8			42.6		
Female	61.2			57.4		
Level of education						
Lower secondary or below	12.1			15.6		
Secondary, post-secondary	59.7			58.2		
Tertiary	28.2			26.2		
Employment						
Employed	78.3			80.7		
Not employed	21.8			19.4		
Difficulty in making ends meet[1]		3.0	(1.3)		3.2	(1.4)
Biological child with current partner	87.4			50.0		
Prior co-resident union	9.6			29.9		

Note: n.a. = not applicable

[1] measured on scale 1 (with great difficulty) to 6 (very easily)

Source: Generations and Gender Surveys, Waves 1 and 2, authors' calculations

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